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Chairperson: Ms. Abdulaziz (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Malaysia)
later: Ms. Kusorgbor (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Ghana)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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In the absence of Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Ms. Abdulaziz (Malaysia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 98: Advancement of women (A/59/38 (Part I), A/59/38 (Part III), A/59/135, A/59/185, A/59/185/Corr.1, A/59/281, A/59/313 and A/59/357)

Agenda item 99: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (A/59/115, A/59/214 and A/59/281)

1. **Ms. Hannan** (Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs), making a joint statement on behalf of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues (OSAGI) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), recalled that 2004 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which had 178 States parties Adherence to and implementation of that instrument had contributed significantly to the enhancement of the rule of law and fostered a climate discouraging violations of women's rights. The commemoration of its adoption provided an opportunity to review how the Convention had formed the legal basis for furthering those rights and developing strategies for accelerating the process of ensuring that women exercised their human rights fully.

2. Referring to the reports of the Secretary-General on advancement of women and violence against women (A/59/281) and trafficking in women and girls (A/59/185), the speaker stressed that, although violence against women, including trafficking, was widely recognized as a matter of serious public concern, it could not be effectively tackled through legislation alone: a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach was needed, involving policy and programme measures, support for victims, awareness-raising and capacity-building, in order to strengthen prevention and protection and ensure redress for victims and punishment for perpetrators.

3. As report A/59/281 indicated, the preparation of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms and manifestations of violence against women, to be made available to the General Assembly at the sixtieth session, was continuing. DAW was deeply grateful to Governments of France and Netherlands for their financial contributions in view of the study, would organize expert meetings on particular topics and would commission background papers to synthesize existing information on achievements and challenges in tackling violence against women worldwide. To that end, it would seek to collect from Governments further information on their experience and best practices and offer non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations bodies an opportunity to contribute to the study.

4. The review and evaluation activities regarding the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action carried out by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at its forty-ninth session would coincide with the tenth year anniversary of the First World Conference on Women, held in Mexico in 1975. The review would focus on implementation at the national level and be based on a high-level interactive dialogue involving national, regional and international NGOs as an element crucial to the success of the process.

5. The conclusions of that review and evaluation would serve as a contribution to the high-level meeting scheduled to be held in 2005 in order to review progress toward attaining the goals set at the 2000 Millennium Summit. The Millennium Declaration had underscored that gender equality and women's empowerment were key prerequisites for eradicating poverty and hunger and ensuring sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be seen as an instrument for supporting the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Since the Platform for Action had set few measurable targets, efforts towards attaining the MDGs, expressed in terms of agreed global targets and indicators, offered an opportunity to insist on the fulfilment of commitments at the national level and on measuring advances and outcomes.

6. Although the review and evaluation process had not yet been completed, preliminary analysis showed that, despite progress in some areas, many challenges

and obstacles identified in 1995 in 2000 persisted. Although in many parts of the world significant advances had been achieved for women the areas of health, education and employment, much remained to be done even where there had been progress. Continued violence against women, insufficient representation of women in decision-making in all sectors and at all levels, discriminatory laws on marriage, the land-ownership situation, inaccessibility of basic reproductive health services to many women and the disproportionate incidence of poverty in women were unacceptable.

7. A number of critical decisions to strengthen commitment to, and further action for, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the special session had been taken at the 2004 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the forty-eighth session of CSW. In its agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality (E/2004/27-E/CN.6/2004/14), the Commission had recommended inter alia facilitating men's participation in gender-equality initiatives, particularly for purposes of capacity-building and raising awareness of issues related to gender equality and the advancement of women, providing positive models to the young and the adolescent boys and setting in motion a sociocultural exchange, especially through the educational process. CSW had also dealt with the issue of women's participation on an equal footing with men in conflict prevention, management and resolution and post-conflict peace-consolidation.

8. ECOSOC's 2004 substantive session had reviewed the system-wide implementation of the 1997/2 agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming in United Nations policies and programmes. Substantial advances in that regard had included the formulation of specific policies and strategies related to gender equality, capacity-building, the development of appropriate methodologies and instruments and inter-agency cooperation activities, particularly through the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. The gap between policies and practice, however, continued to present challenges.

9. The Committee had before it the Secretary-General's report on Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/59/214). The report focused on attention paid to gender-equality issues in the outcomes of major events during the past year — namely, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and in the implementation of and follow-up to major international conferences and summits. It also covered steps taken by the General Assembly and the main committees at the fifty-eighth session to promote gender equality through the gender mainstreaming strategy and assessed the extent to which documentation before the Assembly facilitated gender-sensitive policy formulation.

10. In May 2004, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples had devoted its third session to the theme of indigenous women (see document E/2004/43). There were more than 150,000 indigenous women worldwide. They had often been invisible to human rights, humanitarian and development institutions and faced social dislocation due to conflict, poverty and underdevelopment, lack of access to public resources and marginalization as a result of their cultural and minority status in the various States. The Forum had adopted a number of recommendations to protect and empower indigenous women.

11. The 2004 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, prepared by DAW for presentation to the Second Committee, dealt with fundamental issues related to women and international migration, underscored the importance of understanding the gender-dimension of the causes and consequences of the migratory phenomenon and contained a number of recommendations aimed at empowering migrant, refugee, displaced and trafficked women and girls, promoting and protecting their rights and enhancing their access to services.

12. The Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security concerning four years of implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) would be presented in late October 2004. The report reviewed the advances made and concluded that, notwithstanding progress achieved in advocacy, norm-setting and institutional capacity-building, significant gaps remained in implementing the resolution's recommendations. One major challenge in that regard concerned the protection of women and girls in armed conflicts. Sustained commitment and effort were required to stop gender-based violence and other

human rights violations, end impunity and bring perpetrators to justice. The public debate that the Security Council would hold on 28 October 2004 would focus on those issues.

13. Regarding the status of women in the United Nations system, the representation of women in the professional and higher categories had increased to 36.4 per cent as of 31 December 2004. Within the United Nations Secretariat, the proportion of women in professional and higher posts on appointments of one year or more had reached 37.4 per cent, increasing in the past 12 months by 1.7 per cent, the most significant annual progress since 1998. Women accounted for 29 per cent of staff at senior and higher-level posts, 22.3 per cent at the D-1 level and above, and 42.3 per cent of all professional staff on the more restricted category of posts subject to geographic distribution. At the P-4 and P-5 levels, representation of women had stagnated since 1998, giving cause for concern in view of the significance of those levels as a pool for senior and higher posts. As requested by the General Assembly, OSAGI had conducted a study on the probable causes of the slow advance in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat. The study had identified a number of areas where new approaches and measures were required, including recruitment and selection processes, accountability and the working climate and culture. For instance, to broaden the pool of women applicants, more proactive and targeted recruitment methods were necessary in order to attract the most qualified women candidates. The Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on future operations of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (A/59/313). The report provided information on the revitalization of the Institute, including the constitution of the Executive Board and the holding of its first session on 27 July 2004, and on initiatives undertaken by the Institute.

14. The following year, 2005, would provide a number of important opportunities for further promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition to an effective ten-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration, it would be critical to ensure that gender perspectives formed an integral part of the issues to be treated during the high-level meeting on implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development. The Committee should use those opportunities to ensure full mainstreaming of the gender perspective in all areas of work of the General Assemble and play a key role in encouraging the international community to show the political will, undertake the concerted action and assume the responsibilities that were required.

15. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women), referring to the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), said that the themes of equality, development and peace, which had inspired the world conferences on women and the commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action, lay at the heart of UNIFEM's work. In the past decade, there had been important advances in each of the three thematic areas in which UNIFEM worked: strengthening women's economic security and rights; supporting women's leadership in governance, peace and security; and promoting women's human rights, including ending violence against women, and combating the spread of HIV/AIDS. Legislation has been enacted to strengthen women's economic security in such vital areas as land and property rights, decent employment, and access to credit and markets. Quotas had been adopted to increase women's representation in political decision-making in all regions, including countries emerging from long years of conflict. Currently, at least 45 countries had legislation against domestic violence, 21 were drafting new laws and many more had amended criminal assault laws to include domestic violence. By 2000, 118 countries had developed national action plans to implement their commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, a number that was expected to increase in 2005. HIV/AIDS, once seen as a medical issue, was increasingly recognized as a gender issue.

16. UNIFEM played a key role in supporting countries to move forward on all of those fronts. Its support to Governments and women's groups in many countries in Africa had produced laws protecting women's rights to property and inheritance; and its work with women's and Governments in Central Asia had resulted in amending the land law to include women in the redistribution of land. It supported women's leadership and organizing in Africa. In Rwanda, in particular, that support had contributed to

the election of women to 49 per cent parliament seats, the highest parliamentary representation of women in the world. In Afghanistan UNIFEM had initiated and worked with the Gender and Law Working Group, which included United Nations bodies, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) and women legal experts and aimed at ensuring that the Constitutional Loya Jirga process would incorporate gender equality and recognize women's rights, monitoring the election of women and providing training for over 100 women delegates once they would be selected. Those efforts had resulted in the inclusion of women's equality with men in the transitional constitution adopted in December 2003, and many women had participated in recent elections. UNIFEM support to Iraqi women kept many local networks alive and had helped women gain three seats in the interim government council and a guarantee of 27 per cent of electoral representation under the provisional Constitution.

17. With regard to HIV/AIDS, Governments were increasingly aware of the need for laws with gender-based provisions regarding prevention, treatment and care of infected persons. In Kenya, in cooperation with the Women's Political Caucus and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNIFEM had carried out a successful campaign to ensure that the law on HIV/AIDS prevention and control, presented to Parliament in late 2003, would address women's needs.

18. Those advances, however, had shown clearly that laws and frameworks could only go so far. To change the realities of women's everyday lives, laws and policies must be implemented, and attitudes and practices must change. For that to happen, sustained partnerships, monitoring and resources were needed, especially at the national and regional levels, along with sharing good practices among agencies on the ground and strengthening cooperation among operational and regulatory bodies of the United Nations. In that regard, close monitoring by Governments, civil society and United Nations agencies was necessary to ensure that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was increasingly implemented, as it constituted the most authoritative standard on the meaning and requirements of gender equality. Its provisions were legally binding and it provided for an independent monitoring and reporting mechanism. UNIFEM's work under the Convention focused on building the capacity of Governments and women's groups to use that powerful instrument to facilitate change, strengthen the legal and normative regulatory frameworks that guaranteed gender equality, increase the effectiveness of the activities of execution, vigilance and accountability and establish sustainable associations at the national and local levels.

19. Despite such gains, economic insecurity, wars and armed conflicts, and the spread of HIV/AIDS had generated a host of new challenges to the efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The trafficking of women and girls and the deliberate targeting of women in armed conflict, along with the rising toll of HIV/AIDS on women, required greater national, regional and global cooperation. Human trafficking should be considered in the context of migratory flows, intensified by demand for labour in the more developed countries, combined with increasing restrictions on the entry of many of those who migrated to meet that demand. Failure to protect and recognize the rights of persons regarded as "illegal" immigrants made them vulnerable to all forms of exploitation. UNIFEM's work on human trafficking had resulted in setting up cooperative frameworks at the regional and intergovernmental level to solve such problems and guarantee the rights of all workers.

20. The HIV/AIDS pandemic was fuelled by gender inequality that extended across all regions and knew no boundaries. In 10 years, the percentage of women among adults living with HIV/AIDS has risen from 38 to 48 per cent worldwide and to 58 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. Strategies to address that scourge should be local, regional and global in scope. UNIFEM's work on gender and HIV/AIDS focused on strengthening HIV-positive women's networks, supporting activities addressing adolescents and linking local experiences and solutions to national, regional and global policy-making in terms of resource allocation and adoption of gender-based approaches to prevention, treatment and care.

21. Addressing and eliminating violence against women must remain a high priority. UNIFEM's knowledge and expertise on the links between violence against women, conflicts and HIV/AIDS deserved to be widely shared and supported. Yet UNIFEM's Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women, which promoted community-based and regional initiatives seeking solutions to gender-related violence in culturally appropriate ways, was in danger of remaining a showcase of what could have been

done. There was a need to commit the resources required to fight the persistence of oppression and violence that continued to define the lives of many women around the world.

22. The following year, 2005, presented a unique opportunity to make good on the international community's commitments to women. Bringing together the ten-year review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in March, the five-year review of implementation of the Millennium Declaration in September and the anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in October, the year 2005 would determine whether the international community was prepared to take the necessary steps to make gender equality meaningful to the majority of women, who could only dream of a world free from poverty, violence and discrimination. To that end, it was necessary (1) to recognize that achieving gender equality demanded a two-track approach combining the strategy of gender mainstreaming with renewed investment in women's human rights and women-specific entities to promote them; (2) to review and further strengthen the current architecture of gender equality, which had developed since the Third World Conference on Women in 1985, in order to more effectively institutionalize commitments to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment; (3) to strengthen the coherence and focus on gender issues in coordinating mechanisms within the United Nations at the national level, such as the common country assessment (CCA) system, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP); (4) to align measures for improving the status of women, specified in the Convention, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in order to provide countries with a single set of benchmarks for measuring progress towards gender equality and protection of women, and (5) to invest adequate resources in translating commitments into reality with a view to ending the poverty, discrimination and violence that plagued the lives of women worldwide.

23. **Ms. Moreno** (Director, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) said that although there was currently greater awareness of the importance of gender issues and they were included in political programmes, serious deficiencies remained regarding equal rights and violence against women. In regional conferences on women in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, the speaker had observed the energy and determination with which women fought to exercise their rights, and had concluded that there was an urgent need to adopt specific and coordinated measures aimed at combating poverty, violence and discrimination and ensuring that women participated fully in sustainable development. INSTRAW had formed partnerships aimed at advancing in the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action, promoting gender mainstreaming in all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and strengthening activities for implementing gender-related international agreements. Those tasks required the coordinated and unremitting efforts of all stakeholders.

24. Implementing the mandate given it by the General Assembly and using the support that it had received, INSTRAW had made progress in terms of reform and renewal with a view to performing its role better. The establishment of its Executive Board, consisting of representatives of ten countries in all regions, had been a first step. The Board had adopted INSTRAW's strategic framework and its work programme for 2005, which focused on four strategic areas: dissemination of information, applied research, capacity-building and training, and institutional development.

25. INSTRAW ascribed special importance to synergy, inclusion, coordination and consultation with the United Nations system and had formed a strategic partnership with the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). It also sought to re-establish relations based on confidence with Governments, civil society, the academic community and the private sector. Its new rules were transparency, optimal development of resources, streamlined methods, results-based management and accountability.

26. INSTRAW's web site had been revised with a view to facilitating access to information and provided data on various projects that were being developed, such as a project providing training to indigenous women in the area of information and communication technologies (ICT), a virtual conference on security and gender and a conceptual framework for analysing from a gender perspective the phenomenon of remittances in Latin America and the Caribbean and possibly other regions in the future. A project was also

being developed to complement the work of other organizations in the area of violence and trafficking in women and girls.

27. INSTRAW had mobilized resources and obtained results. To consolidate that process and reaffirm its unique role as a bridge for the development and innovative promotion of information dissemination, research and training, INSTRAW needed the international community's patience and political and financial support and, above all, the confidence of the States.

28. The fact that a woman, Wangari Maathai, had obtained the first Nobel prize for peace was a source of satisfaction and pride. The people and the Government of Kenya and the entire African continent should be congratulated for that distinction that underscored the importance of the rights of women and of their commitment to protecting the world's environment and peace.

29. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) asked the Executive Director of UNIFEM what working strategies were used by the Fund in its cooperation with the Governments of the various African countries, including Senegal, in order to assist women with HIV/AIDS, and how it informed the great number of illiterate women in developing countries and made them aware of their rights.

30. **Ms. Alfaro** (El Salvador) said that her Government was fully committed to the promotion of the gender perspective and the advancement of women and reiterated the country's political will to continue to support INSTRAW in order to enable it to function normally and realize its full potential. She asked the Director of INSTRAW why the Institute needed the General Assembly's political and financial support in 2005.

31. **Ms. Bakker** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, concurred with the Executive Director of UNIFEM that it was necessary to adopt concerted measures to promote the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action more firmly in order to facilitate the attainment of all MDGs. She asked the representatives of DAW, INSTRAW and UNIFEM what would be the best way to ensure full mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the process of reviewing the implementation of the Millennium Declaration scheduled to take place in 2005.

32. Regarding the question of women and peace and security, she asked for more details regarding opportunities and difficulties in relation to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), especially in the context of the general review of gender issues and the related dialogue with signatory countries, regarding, for instance, the systems of supporting and treating victims of sexual violence and punishing the perpetrators.

33. Regarding the in-depth study on all forms and manifestations of violence against women, which would be presented to the General Assembly at the sixtieth session, she asked the Director of DAW to provide details on the measures that had been taken since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 58/185, and inquired whether the document took into account related studies carried out by other agencies of the United Nations system, such as the study on violence against children.

34. **Mr. Ballestrero** (Costa Rica) expressed concern over the criticism implicit in remarks made by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (A/59/313) to the effect that INSTRAW should "regain its visibility and re-establish its status and credibility as a key institution for the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality within the United Nations system" and asked the Director of INSTRAW, in whom his delegation had full confidence, what measures she planned to take in order to re-establish the Institute's credibility. Regarding the issue of the higher level of violence suffered by societies in conflict situations, he said that the matter was important and interested his region, and asked the Executive Director of UNIFEM to outline the measures taken and studies conducted by the Fund in that connection.

35. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, DAW), replying to the question of the delegation of Netherlands on women and peace and security, said that recourse to CEDAW as a human-rights framework in conflict and post-conflict situations was necessary. DAW was conducting a project in that area with support from the Government of New Zealand.

36. Regarding the study on violence against women, information had been exchanged with the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, meetings had been held with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against

women, including its causes and consequences, and with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the study on violence against children had been examined. DAW had received financial support to organize meetings and prepare documentation and intended to use all information available during the following year in preparing the study.

37. Linkages between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the implementation MDGs would be examined in the process of review and evaluation carried out by CSW. However, one of the crucial means of mainstreaming gender issues in activities related to the Millennium Declaration was to incorporate the gender perspective in the Secretary-General's report.

38. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Director, UNIFEM), referring to UNIFEM's cooperation with Governments, said that the key ways of promoting change were policy reform and aligning the legal framework with international standards, creating gender-sensitive institutions, particularly through budget allocations and transparency and accountability in the budget preparation process, establishing a common basis of women's organizations and strengthening them, promoting women's leadership on a long-term basis to enable them to influence policy formulation and forging relevant international partnerships among all the sectors and countries. Replying to the question asked by the delegation of Senegal on UNIFEM's cooperation with Governments of developing countries in combating HIV/AIDS, she said that the fund supported organizations of infected women to enable them to be heard and influence policy formulation.

39. Replying to the question asked by the Netherlands on women and peace and security, she said that efforts had been invested in awareness campaigns to enhance support for the Security Council resolutions and a global partnership was being forged among civil society organizations (CSOs), Governments, the private sector and the United Nations system for promoting best practices. The standards and practices thus made available would then be implemented in eradicating violence and impunity.

40. Replying to the question asked by Netherlands on linkages between the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the attainment of MDGs, she said that gender mainstreaming in all MDGs and adopting a comprehensive approach — since they were mutually reinforcing — were fundamental. Referring to the question asked by the delegation of Costa Rica on violence against women, she said that UNIFEM, in cooperation inter alia with the media, Governments, civil society and the police, had carried out very effective projects aimed at amending legislation and changing practices in Latin America and other regions. UNIFEM had examined domestic violence and violence linked with traditional practices, wars and conflicts and human trafficking.

41. **Ms. Moreno** (Director, INSTRAW), replying to the question asked by El Salvador, noted that in 2003 the Institute had lost credibility and resources, and its ability to carry out activities, support research and implement its programmes had diminished. INSTRAW would not have continued to exist without support from the General Assembly, which had decided to revitalize the Institute through the establishment of a working group and an Executive Board. INSTRAW had been reformed and its mandate renewed with the support of international organizations and a fully committed staff. There was currently no doubt of the importance of INSTRAW, the only institute established by the General Assembly to focus on gender issues, but the General Assembly's political and financial support continued to be crucial. The Institute had presented funding proposals for various projects and the possible partners should analyse those projects before contributing funds.

42. Replying to the Netherlands, she said that INSTRAW was holding a virtual debate among experts on the challenges that the issue of peace and security entailed for women worldwide. A project on gender mainstreaming in security reform was being implemented in the Dominican Republic. Violence against women was part of violence in general. In South Africa, the Institute cooperated with the Government, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on a project on HIV/AIDS and violence. The fight against trafficking in women was one of the key areas in which INSTRAW complemented the work of other bodies. The speaker concurred that fulfilling the third MDG did not suffice and that it was necessary to mainstream the gender perspective in all MDGs, and

reaffirmed that it was impossible to attain them without women's full participation.

43. **Mr. Lorenzo** (Dominican Republic) asked UNIFEM whether the global compact was considered as a means for strengthening partnerships between Governments, civil society and the private sector in solving the problems of gender inequality in the areas of work and human rights, and as a way of funding that combat.

44. **Ms. Bige** (Sweden) asked for more detailed information regarding cooperation on gender issues in the United Nations system, the difficulties experienced with monitoring and implementing gender equality goals in human-resources plans of action, the resources available to that end in the United Nations and the number of coordinators working on issues related to the advancement of women.

45. **Ms. Groux** (Switzerland), referring to paragraphs 87 and 88 of report A/59/214 and in view of the fact that the General Assembly resolutions made no specific references to gender equality, asked whether the Secretariat could on its own initiative provide pertinent indications in connection with the reports. She also observed that it might be convenient to issue guidelines in order to facilitate coordination among the agencies of the United Nations system concerning gender equality.

46. **Ms. Fonseca** (Venezuela) asked how UNIFEM addressed the fact that most informal sector workers were women.

47. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) asked how UNIFEM planned to access women in war zones, where their rights were violated on a daily basis.

48. **Mr. Faati** (Gambia) asked what were INSTRAW's strategic relations with UNIFEM and DAW.

49. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, DAW) replied to the delegation of Sweden that the United Nations had one of the most effective mechanisms for achieving gender equality: an international network for information exchange on best practices for cooperation on preparing reports, and for bearing the Organization's influence to bear on the processes involved. One of the main difficulties in monitoring achievements in the system was that not all data collected were comparable, owing to differing methods of staff classification. The Inter-Agency Network had about 65 coordinators working on gender-related issues, in addition to department staff responsible for, inter alia, gender-balance, quality-of-life and workplace sexual-harassment issues.

50. Replying to the delegation of Switzerland, she concurred that, although the resolutions made no explicit reference to gender issues, that did not prevent the adoption of relevant measures. However, the more explicit was the language in reports and resolutions, the more would mainstreaming and follow-up of gender-related issues progress as part of general activities. In that connection, she once again launched an appeal for incorporating gender issues in the reports of all the bodies and agencies as the Security Council had requested.

51. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Director, UNIFEM), replying to the question on relations with the global contact and the private sector, said that the Calvert Investment Fund and UNIFEM had drawn up five principles applicable to women's work that enterprises desirous of benefiting from the investment fund should meet: closing the income gap between men and women, ensuring that women's working conditions were safe, ensuring women's civic engagement and right to organize as workers, and ensuring attention to the type of marketing and advertisement strategies employed by companies. These principles applied not just to the companies receiving funding from the fund, but also to their affiliates abroad and their subcontractors.

52. Replying to the question of the Swedish delegation on coordination and cooperation in the United Nations, she said that UNIFEM had achieved remarkable progress in its activities in the field, but more needed to be done. To that effect, it would be appropriate to apply to gender equality the same criteria that were applied to human rights as a whole in the planning and in the activities of country teams. That approach would strengthen cooperation between the system's operational and regulatory bodies in implementing CEDAW. On the other hand, recent analysis had shown that, system-wide, the mandate of about 1,300 civil servants included tasks related to gender equality and it was therefore difficult to mobilize and organize the work of so many people towards ongoing cooperation, let alone information exchange.

53. The delegation of Venezuela had rightly observed that most informal sector workers were women, who moreover were relegated to the lower ranks of that sector. The relation between women's poverty and their traditional employment in the informal sector was being studied in the context of the MDGs, particularly poverty reduction. Replying to the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, she said that in conflict areas UNIFEM endeavoured to highlight the impact not only of sexual violence but also of displacement and social fragmentation on women and girls. Moreover, UNIFEM cooperated with humanitarian organizations and other bodies, such as UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in a bid to provide women with necessary protection. A network of former women combatants in Africa helped with reintegration and women's organizations on the ground received support for participating in peace talks, but it was necessary to ensure that peace agreements were implemented and women participated actively in that process. UNIFEM had sought to promote the participation of women in the reconstruction process and ensure that their interests were taken into consideration in the new constitutional and legal frameworks and institutions. It also helped women to understand the democratic electoral procedures and tried to promote the rule of law and equality before the law, which also entailed introducing safeguards at community level, mainly with a view to strengthening respect for human rights.

54. **Ms. Moreno** (INSTRAW), replying to the questions raised by Gambia and Sweden, stressed that INSTRAW sought to avoid duplicating the work of other United Nations bodies, concentrating instead on creating synergies with them. Cooperation between organizations pursuing the same goals was essential. INSTRAW's web site was a good example. DAW and UNIFEM were consulted beforehand to ensure that the site's format would complement theirs in content and design. The resulting web site was completely different from the other two but interactive, user friendly and with greater emphasis on civil society. DAW's web site was more institutional. INSTRAW's site contained links to the sites DAW and UNIFEM.

55. The significant progress achieved in the United Nations with regard to women should be disseminated broadly. INSTRAW had used its network of universities, NGOs and CSOs to launch projects involving various agencies of the United Nations system and cooperated with them in specific areas, coordinating all of its activities with DAW and UNIFEM. It also cooperated with public and private academic institutions in various parts of the world. To facilitate the search for relevant information, INSTRAW was compiling a worldwide directory of research projects on gender-related issues.

56. *Ms. Kuvangbor (Ghana), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

57. **Ms. Feride Acar** (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that in the past year four more States had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and 11 more had ratified its Optional Protocol. At the Vienna and Beijing conferences, Member States had committed to the universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000. The speaker urged the countries that were not yet parties to review any remaining obstacles to ratification. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention should provide additional impetus for such efforts.

58. At its thirtieth and thirty-first sessions, held in January and July 2004 respectively, CEDAW had considered the reports of 16 States parties, five of which had reported for the first time, while one State party had submitted a follow-up report requested by the Committee. Several States that had previously ratified the Convention had submitted combined reports covering their outstanding reporting obligations. Although concerned about the significant delay with which some of those reports had been submitted, the Committee was gratified that interaction between these States and the Committee had been achieved. The Committee had noted that, as a result of social and cultural rules of conduct or the persisting prejudices, discriminatory practices due to custom and gender stereotypes, there existed in all countries factors that made it difficult to attain gender equality. It was essential that States parties should energetically and creatively address their obligation to eliminate de facto and de jure discrimination against women under articles 2 (f) and 5 of the Convention.

59. The Committee had stressed that States tackling an economic crisis or emerging from conflict should not relegate gender equality to the back burner. Promoting gender equality should be an explicit component of their development strategies and plans,

not only because by ratifying the Convention they had committed themselves voluntarily to guaranteeing de facto gender-equality, but also because it was a crucial prerequisite to sustainable development. One of the various general trends observed in reviewing country reports gave the Committee cause for special concern: the situation of vulnerable groups of women — particularly women in rural areas, migrants, minority women and elderly women — who in many cases experienced multiple forms of discrimination. Accordingly, the Committee called on States to step up efforts to ensure compliance with the Convention to ensure women's full enjoyment of their rights under that instrument.

60. At its thirtieth session, the Committee had adopted General recommendation No. 25 on article 4 (1) of the Convention concerning temporary special measures. The speaker urged all States parties to study it and insisted that the introduction of special measures such as quotas, economic assistance to women or timetables and time frames was not considered discriminatory but a de facto part of a strategy necessary for accelerating the achievement of actual equality between women and men.

61. Announcing that the Optional Protocol to the Convention had become an operational instrument, the speaker noted that, at its thirty-first session, the Committee had adopted its first decision under the Optional Protocol declaring a complaint filed against Germany inadmissible. Three further communications had been registered. The Committee had also completed its first inquiry under article 8 of the Optional Protocol, carried out in Mexico on the matter of killings and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juarez. The Mexican Government's cooperation had been effective and commendable. The speaker urged States parties to disseminate widely information about the Protocol, so that women who believed that their claims were not adequately addressed through domestic means might avail themselves of that international remedy.

62. In the past year, the Committee had enhanced its working methods. Much of that work had been accomplished in an informal meeting hosted by the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights and funded by the Government of the Netherlands. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Netherlands for that support. Immediately after the meeting, the Committee had taken various measures to increase its own efficiency without impairing its constructive dialogue with the reporting States. It had decided inter alia to review the situation of the implementation of the Convention, as an ultimate remedy, including in countries that, although parties to the Convention, had not yet presented any reports. The Committee's current methods of work in were outlined in its annual report.

63. In addition to the difficulties already encountered by the Committee in meeting its responsibilities efficiently and in time, its volume of work was expected to increase considerably in the next future and so were delays in starting the review of reports. Such delays would discourage States parties from meeting their reporting obligations. Accordingly, the Committee had considered the possibility of reviewing periodic reports in working groups meeting concurrently rather than in plenary session but had rejected that alternative and had agreed to request the General Assembly for an additional week of meeting time for the thirty-third, thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth sessions. Thereafter, and as a long-term solution for handling its workload, the Committee proposed to meet three times a year. The Committee was aware of the financial implications of the proposal and of the debate on the reform of the system of bodies set up under the treaties in accordance with their reporting procedures but believed that the quality of constructive dialogue with States parties should be preserved, if that dialogue were to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. In that light, the Committee appealed to the General Assembly to consider favourably its request for additional meeting time.

64. **Mr. Davidse** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the stabilisation and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, which aligned themselves with the statement, recalled that the European Union strongly supported equal rights for women and men.

65. Marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the European Union acknowledged that the Convention's call for equal rights remained as relevant in the current

year as it had been 25 years earlier, reiterated its call for a universal ratification of CEDAW and urged States that had not yet done so to ratify and accede to the Convention. The European Union also called upon States parties to regularly review their reservations to CEDAW and to withdraw those reservations that were contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention. The European Union had taken note of the Committee's deliberations on ways to improve its working methods and its request for additional meeting time in that context.

66. Women's participation in all areas of activity was crucial to their advancement and to the prosperity of society as a whole. That view was a pillar of European Union policies, including its policies on poverty reduction and promotion of sustainable development. With regard to employment, the European Union strove to achieve equal treatment of women and men in relation to access to employment and education, working conditions and access to decision-making posts in the public and private sectors.

67. A target set under the Lisbon strategy consisted in attaining a 60 per cent employment rate among women by 2010. According to the European Employment Taskforce, to attain that objective, the European Union should eliminate, inter alia, economic disincentives dissuading women from working, wage gaps, sectoral and professional segregation, obstacles to vertical mobility and the lack of affordable and flexible child-minding services. It was therefore necessary to introduce a gender perspective in all fiscal policies and to develop — among other gender-sensitive initiatives — budgetary, social, employment, education and vocational training policies based on that perspective. The European Union would also use European structural funds to promote the participation of women, including migrants and ethnic minority women.

68. The European Union considered the elimination of all forms of violence against women a priority and ascribed cardinal importance to the implementation of comprehensive programmes for preventing and eliminating domestic violence. Gender-based violence was an expression of unequal power relations between men and women. Eradicating it required modifying specific social and cultural patterns and eliminating harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and honour crimes.

69. Given the importance that it ascribed to combating honour crimes and human trafficking, the European Union welcomed the fact that General Assembly resolution 57/179 had had quite an impact. It was also gratifying that 61 states had ratified or acceded to the Palermo Protocol and that the Commission on Human Rights had designated a Special Rapporteur whose mandate focused on human rights aspects of trafficking in persons. Prevention, prosecution and protection should continue to guide the international community in its fight against trafficking. The landmark resolution 1325 (2000) of the Security Council should be fully implemented and disseminated among all parties to conflicts in order that they should systematically fulfil the obligations that it stipulated.

70. Gender inequality was an important factor contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Many women, including married women and young girls, could not negotiate sex or turn down unwanted sex. Harmful practices, such as FGM, polygamy and marital rape placed girls and women at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Stigma and discrimination against HIV positive women subjected them to further violations of their human rights. The European Union looked forward to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, which would focus on the relation between violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

71. As the international community commemorated the tenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the European Union reiterated its strong commitment to the Cairo agenda. The implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action was an essential prerequisite for meeting the internationally agreed development goals outlined in the Millennium Declaration, and in particular those concerning the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, the reduction of child mortality, the improvement of maternal health and the combat against HIV/AIDS. A strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a whole should also address the issue of sexual and reproductive health rights, which were essential to women's empowerment, itself a prerequisite for attaining all MDGs.

72. The participation of men and boys in attaining gender equality was coherent with the empowerment of women and girls. The European Union welcomed the

agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at its March 2004 meeting. Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment were keys to promoting changes required for gender equality and contributed to the full enjoyment of all human rights — including economic and social rights — by women and girls on an equal footing with men and boys. The European Union applauded the gender-mainstreaming advances achieved in the United Nations system, although much remained to be done. Inter alia, it would be appropriate to develop indicators to enhance accountability, establish incentives for successful implementation, set up efficient monitoring systems and introduce the gender perspective in all planning instruments, reporting methods and — through a system of resident coordinators — procedures for evaluating legal implications at the national level. Furthermore, comprehensive and action-oriented policies would be important contributions to women's empowerment.

73. The European Union reaffirmed its full support for the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing+5 review process. It was of utmost importance that gender issues should be taken into account in all review processes and in implementing the outcomes of major United Nations conferences. Gender equality was therefore an important goal and would contribute to attaining the MDGs. The 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the CEDAW had already recognised the relationship between development, security and equality by stating that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace required maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields. As the international community embarked on preparations for the review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration in 2005, the European Union pleaded for greater emphasis of gender equality on the agenda and reaffirmed its commitment to the Beijing Platform of Action.

74. **Mr. Al-Sulaiti** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and assessing the international community's achievements in respect of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, noted that — despite the progress made — it was still necessary to overcome important problems and obstacles, especially regarding poverty eradication. Globalization and the consequent transformations of the world economy had had a powerful and often negative on the living conditions of millions of people worldwide. Unfortunately, that affected primarily women, especially in rural areas, and accordingly one could speak of a phenomenon of feminization of poverty.

75. The Group of 77 and China maintained that, if women realized their full potential, they would contribute decisively to the adoption of national and international initiatives for fulfilling the agreed commitments of poverty eradication, combating illness and promoting sustainable development in general. The Group of 77 and China also believed that gender equality was a prerequisite for development and peace. Jobs, meaningful work and educational opportunities were essential for such equality, since they would enable both women and men to influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. Accordingly, there was a need for further investments in jobs and education.

76. Violence against women was among the worst violations of basic rights and fundamental freedoms. Eradicating that degrading phenomenon should be at the centre of national and international efforts for the advancement and empowerment of women. Multidimensional and multisectoral approaches and strategies should be adopted to that end at all levels, with the participation of the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders. The media and civil society, among others, could play an important role in that regard by raising awareness among the population of the grave consequences of violence for women's physical and mental health and by providing help and assistance to the victims.

77. While recognizing that responsibility for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session rested primarily with national authorities, the Group of 77 and China stressed that enhanced international cooperation was also essential for the effective implementation of the commitments made in those documents. In this context, the Group of 77 and China stressed the need for adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels and for new and additional resources for the developing countries, including the least developed countries (LDCs) and countries with

economies in transition, through all available financing mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private funding sources.

78. The Group of 77 and China welcomed recent advances in revitalizing the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). However, the definitive success of that revitalization process depended on the support of Governments, and in particular the availability of the financial resources necessary for the Institute to function. That was a key requirement under the current circumstances, since carrying out INSTRAW's working programme and strategic plan could contribute to the review and evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

79. It was gratifying that the conclusions of recent United Nations conferences and summits, such as the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, had integrated the gender perspective and reaffirmed the need to achieve gender equality and recognize women's essential role in all development activities. Those intentions should hopefully translate into facts through national, regional and international policies and programmes and would be reaffirmed and reinforced as part of the high-level meeting to be held in 2005 and, in particular, during the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

80. **Ms. Abeysekera** (Sri Lanka) said that the main problem faced in implementing any development policy, including that of advancement of women, was poverty, which had an impact on all efforts in the areas of critical concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. In the case of Sri Lanka, that situation had been aggravated by the consequences of the conflict situation in the country. Sri Lanka welcomed the incorporation of problems affecting particularly women into the strategy for attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as they were closely linked to women. Successive Sri Lankan Governments had set up microcredit and self-help services for the poor, and currently larger NGOs and private sector bodies, especially banks, also took such measures, offering special lending schemes to peer groups without collateral and on easy repayment terms. It was encouraging, especially among small and medium enterprises, that the United Nations has declared 2005 Year of Microcredit, thus underscoring the importance of that practice.

81. In education and health, Sri Lanka had high indicators. In addition to the fact that primary through tertiary education was free, school attendance was compulsory for ages 5-14 years (one year less than in the MDG). Despite a high literacy rate of 91.8 per cent and a net primary enrolment in basic education of 97 per cent, those achievements were not evenly spread countrywide. They lagged especially in poorer areas in the north and east, where conflict had taken its toll, and the less developed areas in the south. There was also need for a more market-oriented education to facilitate employment. In the health sector, public services were free of charge, life expectancy at birth for females was 75.4 years and widespread and successful reproductive health and STD/AIDS-control programmes were effective. However, malnutrition characterized mothers and children in poor families and in the conflict-affected areas, with 37.7 per cent of preschool-age children below the stipulated weight.

82. Despite strong deterrent measures against gender-based violence, including mandatory sentences, special women's and children's desks in major police stations, training of law enforcement officers, community-based legal literacy programmes and access to remedies, nevertheless, the climate of violence created by the conflict situation, the cultural restraint in reporting domestic violence and the lack of sufficient shelters and counselling services for battered women remained challenges to be met. As a result of the armed conflict, it had been necessary to rehabilitate 50,000 war widows and to re-settle 300,000 internally displaced women living in camps.

83. Women's involvement in the economy presented a picture of imbalance. While women accounted for more than half the population, they held proportionately fewer jobs and tended to be exploited at lower wages in the informal sector despite an official equal-wages policy. It was unfortunate that, although the contribution of migrant women to the economy through remittances was considerable, they were often subjected to unfair working conditions, injustice and violence, as some host countries did not accept bilateral regulatory agreements and some jobs were

unscrupulous and even indulged in trafficking in women for prostitution.

84. As with employment, pervasive patriarchy, fostered by culture and tradition, retarded women's upward mobility through power-sharing and access to decision-making, particularly in politics, the private sector and peacemaking, building, maintenance and security areas, notwithstanding Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1366 (2001). The climate of violence during elections and women's gender-based obligations were compounded by a general attitude that should change, if women were to accede to key political and management positions and men were to share leadership.

85. In 1978, Sri Lanka had set up a Women's Bureau that continued to work at the grass-roots level. The Women's Ministry, currently combined with the Ministry for Social Welfare, and the National Committee for Women had several achievements to their credit, including the amendment of the Criminal Code to deal more effectively with gender violence, and the possibility, since 2000, for a mother — and not only a father, as it had previously been the case — to pass on eligibility for citizenship to her children. Civil law pertaining to the family continued to harbour inequalities inasmuch as a mother's rights vis-à-vis the children were not equal to those of the father and the wife did not have the same rights as the husband under several laws on personal matters and in regard to land ownership.

86. Environmental protection was especially important for women, and the Government endeavoured to enlist their support in several environmental, forestry, water supply and clean settlement projects brough non-governmental and community-based organizations (NGOs and CBOs). The main difficulties in that area were lack of continuity in policies and institutional implementation procedures, and the fact that the donors proposing to fund the plans and projects require participatory sharing of water resources.

87. Regarding the girl child, discrimination against her was clearly the first step to gender-based discrimination, which then continued through a woman's life cycle. The Government was in the process of taking measures accordingly. There was an urgent need to raise awareness of the gender-equality of children within families and schools in order to bring about changes in traditional thinking that were vital for promotion of gender equality. In conclusion, it was necessary to adopt a new, more positive and dynamic strategy that would not confine itself to empowering only specific groups of women but rather mainstream the gender perspective in all areas so that women's problems were perceived as challenges for humanity as a whole.

88. **Ms. Asani-Ndelemani** (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Madagascar, a candidate member of SADC, endorsed the statement made by Qatar. She said that, while evidence pointed to progress in some areas of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for promoting the status of women and the attainment of gender equality, persistent inequalities had manifested themselves in others. SADC continued to uphold the commitments and objectives contained in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. SADC encouraged the United Nations to continue mainstreaming the gender perspective in all policies and programmes under the 1997/2 agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council. It also looked forward to an open and fruitful debate in the Security Council during the commemoration of the fourth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security.

89. The southern Africa subregion remained committed to the 1997 Declaration on gender and development and the 1998 Addendum on the eradication of violence against women and children, both of which had been signed by all SADC member States. The Community had undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at achieving the goals set in the Declaration, and in particular the presence of women in at least 30 per cent of posts in political and decision-making structures, women's full access to and control over productive resources to reduce the level of poverty among women, promotion of constitutional and legal reforms, change of social practices that still subjected women to discrimination and adoption of urgent measures to prevent and deal with increasing violence against women and children. Notable progress had been achieved by SADC member states in implementing those commitments. SADC had developed a policy framework on gender, upon which

the member States continued to draw in developing their national gender policies.

90. SADC shared the concern, expressed in the Secretary-General's report A/59/214, that, despite a quantitative increase in the references to women and gender equality in reports submitted to the various committees, limited qualitative attention was paid to gender perspectives and many reports and resolutions contained no concrete recommendations or requests for further action. It was therefore necessary to strive for more specific and focused recommendations that would ensure practical gender mainstreaming at all levels.

91. SADC strongly believed that the information and communication technologies (ICTs) provided enormous opportunities for women's empowerment and expressed its gratitude to the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) for organizing a workshop for its member States aimed at building the capacity of national mechanisms through the use of ICTs. SADC welcomed the decisions of the World Summit on the Information Society and the eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which had further emphasized that ICTs should be harnessed to economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Community recognized the critical role played by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues (OSAGI) in highlighting the importance of introducing the gender perspective in ICTs.

92. As the international community celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it was disheartening to note that the CEDAW Committee still identified de jure and de facto discrimination against women in almost all reporting States. Accordingly, SADC requested the international community to continue working towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child. It also urged DAW to continue to provide technical assistance to the States parties to enable them to fulfil their reporting obligations. SADC would support the CEDAW Committee's efforts to speed up the review of national reports and would like to see more interventions addressing specifically the use of international human rights instruments and the dissemination of concluding observations.

93. In its quest for efficiently mechanisms spearheading gender equality, SADC had conducted an assessment of its national gender mechanisms with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Additional assistance was, however, required at the regional and member State levels to support recommended activities in an effort to render the national mechanisms more effective and better coordinated.

94. SADC thanked UNIFEM for its support and commended it for achieving tangible results in the implementation of its strategy and business plan for 2000-2003. The Secretary-General's report on the Fund's activities (A/59/135) contained a series of recommendations made by the UNIFEM Consultative Committee, which should be considered seriously. SADC requested that future reports provided more details on the sustainability of the initiatives undertaken. As UNIFEM moved into its new multi-year funding framework, SADC hoped that special attention would be paid to the consolidation of its earlier achievements and to the development of its specific competencies.

95. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), endorsed the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She said that the States of the region also appreciated the appointment of a Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women.

96. The CARICOM States accorded a high priority to the empowerment of women and the full enjoyment of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was their firm belief that women's rights were human rights and that neither sustainable development nor durable peace could be attained without consideration of women's perspective. Women still confronted myriad challenges related to poverty, illness — including HIV/AIDS — and violence. Entrenched attitudes and practices must be changed in order to overcome existing inequalities. Mechanisms such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs) should be fully implemented. That called for greater political will, the provision of resources and the development of genuine partnerships at all levels, including between men and women.

97. The CARICOM States had achieved significant advances with regard to women's empowerment. CARICOM had launched a plan of action for 2005, which provided a framework for gender mainstreaming in key CARICOM programmes and constituted a positive development towards the establishment of a single market in the region. Moreover, gender budgeting was gaining importance in many States of the region. Nevertheless, as was the case in other developing countries, the process of global economic integration had had a disproportionately adverse on women in the region. That fact was compounded by traditional social patterns that impaired women's participation in the labour market and concomitantly their ability to move their households out of poverty. Women in the region were also particularly vulnerable in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As a result of those trends, CARICOM Ministers of Women's Affairs had decided, at the Fourth Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women, to accord priority to poverty eradication, access to health care with a special focus on HIV/AIDS and national institution-building for the advancement of women. Consequently, the region would accelerate action to address the gender dimensions of poverty, undertake legal reform to safeguard the rights of women infected with HIV/AIDS and promote responsible sexual behaviour.

98. CARICOM was particularly concerned over the rising incidence of the traffic in women and girls worldwide and supported efforts to address the root causes of that phenomenon, provide social support and rehabilitation and reintegration services to women and endeavour to bring traffickers to justice. The member States had launched awareness-raising programmes and legislative action in the fight against trafficking in women and girls. They nevertheless reiterated the need to improve the economic situation of women, inter alia by providing debt relief to heavily indebted countries, increasing development assistance and enhancing the access of products produced in developing countries to developed country markets.

99. As the international community celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of CEDAW, the CARICOM States reaffirmed their commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality. The Convention remained the most important international legal instrument on the rights of women. CARICOM was particularly heartened by the States that had become parties to the Convention in the past year. Various judicial and government officials of the region had recently participated in a colloquium on the application of international human rights law at the domestic level and in a training workshop for government officials responsible for preparing the reports of States parties. Both programmes had helped to build the countries' capacities for implementing the Convention and reporting on progress achieved. The importance of that collective evaluation and of the sharing of best practices could not be overemphasized and some CARICOM countries would formally present their reports in 2005.

100. CARICOM States fully supported an extension of the annual meeting time of CEDAW to enable it to eliminate the backlog of reports awaiting consideration and provide an incentive to timely reporting. CARICOM eagerly looked forward to the review of progress achieved in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the high-level meeting to be convened in order to review the implementation of the MDGs in 2005. CARICOM was heartened by the revitalization of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and hoped that the financial resources necessary for the implementation of its strategic plan would be made available.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.